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EXONYMS: PRINCIPLES IN REDUCING EXONYMS

Donor-recommended exonyms: a different approach to traditional names

Submitted by the Eastern Mediterranean Division
(other than Arabic)**

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1. By definition, an exonym is a "name used in a specific language for a topographic feature situated outside the area where that language has official status, and differing from the endonym not only by diacritical marks or through conversion". 1/

2. The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names have repeatedly stressed the importance of the universal use of standardized endonyms, and have advocated the consequent reduction in the number of exonyms. Various countries have published - and brought to the attention of the Group of Experts and the Conferences - lists of exonyms in their own particular language or languages, covering selected regions outside their political (and toponymic) jurisdiction, or even the entire world. The present paper offers a different, though complementary, approach to the subject of toponyms.

3. After some 25 years of toponymic activity on the part of these United Nations institutions, it is clear that the use of exonyms cannot be totally eliminated. The reasons are of a historical nature on the one hand, and of a linguistic-phonological character on the other. Exonyms resulting from the latter set of conditions may, perhaps, not be eliminated, for entirely objective reasons. But historical exonyms or traditional names can, at least in principle, be reduced in number, if not completely eliminated.

4. However, a specific country - to be termed a donor country in the present context - can request, or at least recommend, that all but a limited number of toponyms in its own territory be always referred to by their endonyms, and official endonyms where possible, when used by the international community, i.e. by receiver countries. The resulting residue of a limited number of geographical names would then form a list of donor-recommended exonyms.

5. This is the case in Israel. As part of the Land of the Bible, many places in the country are referred to by foreign writers, publishers and cartographers by their Europeanized biblical names, these constituting exonyms in the context of official Israeli toponymy. Perhaps the best known example is Jerusalem. The Hebrew endonym, both standardized and official, is ירושלים, transliterated Yerushalayim by the official Israeli (and recommended by the Group of Experts) romanization system. However, different linguistic societies employ different exonyms, resulting from the different translations of the Bible: Jerusalem (English, German), Jérusalem (French), Jeruzalem (Dutch, Afrikaans), Jerusalen (Spanish), Gerusalemme (Italian), Urshalim (Arabic) and others.

6. All maps of Israel in Hebrew published by the Survey of Israel, the national survey and mapping authority, carry the official names conferred or ratified by the Government Names Commission; 1:50,000-scale topographic maps, indeed, carry all the official names. Romanized maps of Israel, too, published by the same authority, show the official endonyms, transliterated according to the system mentioned above. These maps carry, in parentheses, the English exonyms for a limited number of geographical features. The

exonyms are also displayed on road signs in Israel, in order to make them easier to identify, e.g. by tourists. In maps published in other countries and in different receiver languages these places may then also be indicated by the respective exonyms, though preferably as secondary names. But other names should be shown in their endonymic form only. This rule is generally adhered to by some of the well-known international map and atlas publishers, such as Rand-McNally in the United States of America.

7. The list of exonyms in the national gazetteer is as follows: 2/

Hebrew endonym (romanized)	English exonym
Yisra'el	Israel
Yerushalayim	Jerusalem
'Akko	Acre
Elat	Eilat
Hefa	Haifa
Kefar-Nahum	Capernaum
Mezada, Horvot	Masada
Nazerat	Nazareth
Qesari, Horbat	Caesarea
Teverya	Tiberias
Yafo	Jaffa
Yam haMelah	Dead Sea
Yam Kinneret	Sea of Galilee
Yarden, Nehar	Jordan, River
Karmel, Har	Carmel, Mount
Tavor, Har	Tabor, Mount

8. In foreign maps, other toponyms should then be printed in their endonymic form, romanized by the official system where applicable, and converted (i.e. transliterated where possible, or transcripted) into other scripts, but not exonymized. Thus, Nahariyya and not Nahariah, Netanya and not Nathania, Ashqelon and not Ashkelon or Ascalon etc.

Notes

1/ See Glossary of Toponymic Terminology. N. Kadmon, ed. Working Group on Terminology of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, version 1.2 (February 1992), p. 6.

2/ N. Kadmon and M. Talmi, Transliteration of Geographical Names in the Maps of Israel. Survey of Israel cartographic papers No. 9 (1982). See also Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Athens, 17 August-7 September 1977, vol. 1, Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.79.I.4), resolution 13, annex.